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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the Ozark Elementary Curriculum Project undertaken to provide the region's teachers with resources to create a positive image of the Ozarks and its cultural heritage. Using a multicultural approach, the curriculum presents regional culture as a valid alternative to any standardized national culture, and attempts to demonstrate the American ideal that being different connotes neither superiority nor inferiority. Material is structured around a set of questions relating to everyday life. Questions address personal identity, meeting daily needs, making a living, cooperation, communication, entertainment, and dealing with the unknown. A timeline provides the device for relating these questions to the broader regional and national history. The curriculum itself consists of 3 learning modules dealing with the Ozarks as a region, a culture, and a history, and 4 learning activities which examine specific aspects of Ozark life: genealogy, music, education, and language. Four sections of teacher background information contain material on geography, history, and ethnic groups which has been specifically adapted for elementary use. Bibliographies are also included. The inexpensive project was developed with open-ended activities to facilitate its implementation in a variety of Ozark communities. (LP)

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THE OZARKS ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM PROJECT

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For generations the Ozarks has been described in disparaging terms. Ozarkers and non-Ozarkers have traditionally viewed the culture of the region in a perjorative way. Children growing up in the Ozarks are constantly confronted with derogatory stereotypes of Ozarkers and their culture, or lack thereof. The children grow up to be the teachers in the regional schools and convey to their students this condescending attitude toward the region's culture - the same one that was conveyed to them as students. Having been taught that this nebulous thing that we call dominant culture is superior, teachers in the past have tended simply to impose the standards of the majority on the minority.

Ozark teachers have had very little in the way of regional curricula with which to counter these negative images. The project described here is one attempt to provide the region's teachers with the resources to do the job. The Ozarks Elementary Curriculum Project does not present a romanticized view of the region, nor does it portray the region as a museum piece. The emphasis on the virtues of folk culture is held to a minimum. Although the project presents the Ozarks in such a way as to create a positive image of the region and its cultural heritage, it does not gloss over the negative.

The project stresses the theme of multiculturalism. The Ozarks is now and has been since the early days of settlement a region of many and varied cultures. The characterization of Ozark culture as Upland South, Southern Highland or Lower Midwest, whichever one prefers, is at best a gross over-simplification. Within the Ozarks resides a wide range of ethnic groups, matched in variety by the old stock American population. By examining with

students at this age level their images of the Ozarks and its people within the broader framework of cultural pluralism, students should begin to acquire a positive self-image and a respect for others of differing cultural backgrounds. The presentation of regional culture as an alternative to any standardized national culture is consistent with the philosophy set forth by the Commission on Multicultural Education of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. In its statement, the Commission said:

> ...multicultural education affirms that schools should be oriented toward the cultural enrichment of all children and youth through programs rooted to the preservation and extension of cultural alternatives. Multicultural education recognizes cultural diversity as a fact of life in American society, and it affirms that this cultural diversity is a valuable resource that should be preserved and extended...
>
> To endorse cultural pluralism is to endorse the principle that there is no one model American.

The multicultural approach affords teachers the opportunity to present and demonstrate in meaningful ways the American ideal that being different connotes neither superiority nor inferiority. This is of paramount importance in the rural Ozarks. The average elementary classroom in the region presents a mix of native Ozarkers and newcomers, often creating a situation of social conflict and personal confusion on both sides. Additionally, the Ozarks contains a very small minority population and, therefore, positive exposure to minority cultures is minimal. The multicultural approach provides teachers with a means for handling these situations.

The framework around which the project is structured is a set of questions that address aspects of everyday living. The seven questions are:

1. Who am I and how did I get here?
2. How can we take care of our daily needs?
3. How can we make a living?
4. How can we get along with others?
5. How can we communicate?
6. How can we enjoy ourselves?
7. How can we deal with the unknown?

The answers to these questions are an important part of what constitutes "culture." Everyone answers in his or her own way, but the ways of answering are often influenced by the racial, ethnic, religious and other groups to which we all belong.

With the seven questions providing an organizational framework for the curriculum; a time line provides the temporal dimension. The answers to the seven questions vary with time and the time line provides a device for relating the questions to the broader history of the region and the country.

OECP: The Curriculum

The classroom activities that form the core of the project are in the form of three teaching modules that address the major themes outlined above: the region; its culture, and its history.

The first module, entitled "The Ozarks as a Place", introduces the Ozarks as a unique physical region highlighting such features as relief, rivers, vegetation, and wildlife, and relates the Ozarks to surrounding regions. A filmstrip/tape program has been developed as an introduction to the region and it is accompanied by follow-up learning activities.

The second module, entitled "Peoples and Cultures of the Ozarks" is organized around the seven questions discussed above, and the theme of multiculturalism. A filmstrip/tape program addressing the seven questions serves as an introduction. Each question is presented with a dual purpose in mind. First, the answer to each question is intended to show the variety of responses possible for each question which is the essence of multiculturalism. Second, the questions are presented in such a way as to demonstrate how the answers have changed through time, thus introducing the historical dimension. The module stresses that each cultural group responds in its own way to the seven questions and the variety of answers is neither right nor

OZARK TIME LINE

THE OZARKS THROUGH TIME										
Subject	Pre-History	1541	1673	1762	1803	1830	1860-1870	1900	1930	Today
	Native American	Exploration				Settlement		Modern		

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wrong, but simply different. The module is accompanied by follow-up learning activities that further develop each of the seven questions.

The third module entitled "The Ozarks Through Time" is organized around the time line discussed earlier. Classroom learning activities relating to the major periods in Ozark history are presented. A special activity on the Civil War, an event of great importance to the Ozarks, is presented as part of the module. The activities relate in various ways to the seven questions and the theme of multiculturalism.

In addition to the three teaching modules, four learning activities that deal with aspects of life in the Ozarks are included in the project. Each of the learning activities relates to one or more of the seven questions. The first is genealogy which relates to the question "Who am I and how did I get here?" The second is music which is most closely tied to the question "How do we enjoy ourselves?" but can also be related to the questions "Who am I and how did I get here?" and " How do we communicate?" The music activity includes a filmstrip/tape program entitled "Music of the McCord Bend" which focuses on traditional Ozark music and its transmission from one generation to another. The third learning activity is on the subject of education and relates to the questions "How can we take care of our daily needs?" and "How can we communicate?" The final learning activity deals with language and relates to the questions "How can we communicate?" and "Who am I and how did I get here?"

The three learning modules and four learning activities comprise all of the classroom activities included in the first volume of the Ozarks Elementary Curriculum Project. An additional twenty learning activities have been developed or are in development and will be made available at a later date as a supplement to the volume currently in press.

Teacher Background Material

The classroom activities are for the most part open-ended and, except for the filmstrip/tape programs, can be adapted to fit almost any particular classroom situation. Additionally, most activities can be modified or expanded by teachers who choose to add their own personal touch to the curriculum. To assist teachers in these areas, a substantial amount of background material is included with the curriculum.

A section entitled "Culture, Cultures and Multiculturalism" provides background on the subject of culture. A section entitled "The Basic Problems of Human Life" examines each of the seven questions. A section entitled "The Ozarks as a Place" provides teachers with a mini geography of the physical Ozarks. A section entitled "The Ozarks Through Time" serves as a mini history of the Ozarks. A section entitled "Cultural Groups in the Ozarks" profiles the major groups associated with the Ozarks (Indians, French, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Blacks, and Amish and Mennonites). The material contained in the teacher background section is available elsewhere, although histories of the Ozarks are few and far between and relatively little is available on some of the cultural groups, particularly the Scotch-Irish. Their inclusion in the Ozarks Elementary Curriculum Project, and they do comprise more than half of the volume, is based on two considerations. First, elementary teachers do not have the time to search out the needed materials, and only those in larger school districts would even have access to the library resources required to provide background on culture, the history of the region or ethnic groups. Second, most of what is available is not suited for the needs of elementary teachers. For example, there is no scarcity of material available on Indians or the Civil War. Most of what is available on these topics, however, is of little value directly to elementary teachers.

All of the sections described above were written especially for OECP and relate directly to the project.

In addition to the background material, annotated bibliographies accompany each section, including information on both printed and audio-visual materials. Finally, a bibliography of all materials housed in the Southwest Missouri State University resource center, which was set up to service the needs of the Ozarks Elementary Curriculum Project, is included.

Implementation of OECP

The Ozarks Elementary Curriculum Project can be implemented utilizing several approaches. First, the entire project, including the core volume, three filmstrip/tape programs, and several maps provides a full term course on the Ozarks. The individual activities were set up in such a way that any number of classroom activities can be employed in any sequence. Finally, the core volume can be employed as a source of background material for teachers who want to develop their own teaching activities on the Ozarks. Thus the teacher is provided with maximum flexibility in implementing OECP.

A major consideration throughout the development of OECP was the factor of cost. The objective was to develop a package of learning materials that would be within the financial reach of even the smallest rural school district in the Ozarks. An expensive curriculum package filled with elaborate audio-visual materials would be of little value to Ozark schools since most could not afford it. With this in mind, the inclusion of expensive peripherals was held to a minimum. The three filmstrip/tape programs included with the project, although important, are not considered integral. A teacher possessing only the core volume can employ most of the classroom activities.

The Ozarks Elementary Curriculum Project is designed to fulfill a previously unmet need. It is not a package of "canned" classroom exercises,

although the filmstrips and some of the activities can be plugged in and used with little forethought or preparation. OECP is more a philosophy, in considerable detail admittedly, for use by teachers who want to enrich the educational experience of young Ozarkers through the study of regional culture. Its use requires both forethought and preparation on the part of the teacher. In the end, the result can be a generation of young Ozarkers with a new found pride in their own cultural heritage and, at the same time, a greater appreciation for those of differing cultural backgrounds.